

Flynn, Eileen

From: Kathi Liberman <kliberman@wethersfieldha.org>
Sent: Monday, January 26, 2015 3:04 PM
To: HSTestimony
Subject: *S.B. No. 280 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES.

Regarding SB No 280 (Raise) An Act Concerning The Department of Social Services

I am Kathi Liberman, Resident Services Coordinator at the Wethersfield Housing Authority and Co-chair of CARSC (CT Association of Resident Service Coordinators in Housing)

Maintaining active benefits (medical, SNAP) is crucial to my residents. Applying for benefits and the processing of these benefits in a timely manner is also crucial. Having questions answered regarding pending benefits or redetermination of benefits is crucial to my residents. My ability to contact a DSS representative to advocate for my residents is crucial. None of this is happening.

CARSC has suggested to the Commissioner that the Department of Social Services have designated agency phone lines for us to call in order to assist our residents. This suggestion was not viewed as important. If phone contact is made with a staff, they will only answer a question about one person! We've been told to call back for another resident's question... and wait for hours again.

The majority of my residents have cell phones with limited amount of minutes. Calling 1-855-CONNECT is an effort in futility. My residents and myself are unable to be "on hold" for well over an hour and then, still, not reach a staff person.

WWW.Connect.CT.Gov/ACCESS only provides information of eligibility as of "today". When redetermination/new forms are sent there is no way to verify the eligibility period for Medical or SNAP or any program....still. Even though we have been told the on line process is "the way to do it" and will provide all needed information. This is not so.

Only when an application is processed on line are we sure that it was received. But...my residents still get letters (in multiples) that state they did not send in their redetermination paperwork and their benefits will be discontinued- confusing my residents even more! (as well as being a total waste of money to mail all these letters, separately, that are generated on the same day) This is unacceptable. Losing benefits and having to wait a ridiculous amount of time to get reinstated is unacceptable. My residents do not need the additional stressors in being told that they did not send in their redetermination papers when in fact, they did. And there is no way to contact a

person! Telling them to just wait and see what happens is not the reply I should be giving them.

It is obvious that there are not enough staff to process the applications/redeterminations once they are scanned into the system. Inadequate staffing is an old problem that still has not been properly addressed. It is appalling that a social service agency routinely fails the people they are responsible to provide for.

How many more years must we have to wait? How many more years must we have to hear that the new system is the answer?

How many more of my residents do I have to tell on a daily basis that DSS is broken and I have no idea when it will get fixed ? How many more news articles do we have to read that talks about the progress DSS is making? Where is this progress?

The Department of Social Services has repeatedly failed to provide the services they are required to provide to the neediest people of Connecticut.

Respectfully

Kathi Liberman

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